



## Earthquake!

The recent earthquake in Haiti was the strongest to hit the region since 1770. The quake leveled thousands of buildings, from schools to the National Palace, and even the President's home. The tremors cut off electricity and phone service. Neighborhoods were crushed, leaving tens of thousands of people homeless.

The tremor was also felt in the neighboring island of Cuba and in the Dominican Republic, which is also part of the island of Hispaniola, along with Haiti. No major damages were reported in either country.

Strong aftershocks continued to shake up Port-au-Prince's 2 million residents after the initial tremor died down. Stunned survivors walked through the rubble searching for loved ones, coworkers and neighbors. Many people found comfort by gathering together in public squares to sing hymns.

Haiti is the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere. About 80% of the country's 9 million people live in poverty. Years of political turmoil have left Haiti with no real safety standards for buildings. In November 2008, after the collapse of a school, the mayor of Port-au-Prince estimated that more than half of the city's buildings were unsafe.

How can we help ensure the safety of these people if an earthquake strikes again?